

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing on:
H.B 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 20, 2021
February 21, 2020

Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Scott Bonalumi. I live in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a current member of Prime Time House.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

I am respectfully requesting that the legislature commit to reestablishing funding to the original amount set before last year's cuts. An even better situation would be to increase the budget by an appropriate amount for new funding for community nonprofits in fiscal year 2021. The index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep up with the pace of increasing costs and help us keep valuable staff by maintaining competitive in wages.

I have been receiving services at Prime Time House for two decades, through all phases of my illness, including incarceration. In this time I have witnessed several budget cuts. In spite of the lack of financing, the clubhouse has still been able to maintain the support and services that help me balance my mental health issues, but at great costs. Staff stress and turn over, programs limited or eliminated, and members losing things that they rely on for maintenance and balance in their lives. I realize the state has many issues at this time, and they all require money to 'fix' them, but I would ask the funding of non-profit programs, like Prime Time, would not be affected. Mental illness can cost more in the long run when things are overwhelmed in people's lives. I personally would not be where I am today, if it were not for the services I receive here.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Thank you,

Scott Bonalumi

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Rosalind Dzurnak. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a current member of Prime Time House.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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I have been a member here at Prime Time House here for 5 years. I have learned a lot of things from Prime Time. They have helped me get a job and work on my social problems. The staff are great here. I feel like Prime Time, shouldn't be shut down. People come here every day for help. Please keep funding Prime Time, even more.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Thank you,

Rosalind Dzurnak

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Gail Ruzbasan. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a current member of Prime Time House.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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I like it very much here at Prime Time House. I have been a member since 2018. Before I found Prime Time House, I just stayed home. I get personal help here. It keeps me active, and I am surrounded by friends. I would really like the budget to be restored and protected, so we can keep places like this up and running. I feel the difference when I don't come in to Prime Time House, it's a big difference.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Regards,

Gail Ruzbasan

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Julio Denicola. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a current member of Prime Time House.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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If Prime Time House was cut, it would be very bad for me and many other members. I would like to see not only maintaining the budget, but also increases to Prime Time House's budget. To better the services, and meet the needs of members, and keep experienced staff. We lost important services in 2017, transportation to appointments being a key one as in our area transportation is very limited.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Thank you,

Julio Denicola

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Lee Resnick. I live and vote in Colebrook, Connecticut. I am a current member of Prime Time House.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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If Prime Time House were not here I would be unhappy. I would still be isolating at home. I would have no friends, and no community to be a part of. I like coming to Prime Time House because I matter and I can help out in the kitchen. I don't know what I would do if I couldn't come to Prime Time. I would most likely end up in the hospital again.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Thank you,

Lee Resnick

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Bonnie Starr. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a current member of Prime Time House.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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Here is a home base community where people share the process of recovery and illness and dealing with their symptoms. I work a lot so it can be hard to get here but I love it when I can. Here I can relate to people here, and they relate to me. The staff advocates treat everyone with dignity and respect, without stigma, as they help people stay balanced and access resources we need to remain living and working independently. And in the case of relapses, PTH is always right here when I need the help to get back on track.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Regards,

Bonnie Starr

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Sie Sie Brayen. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a current member of Prime Time House.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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I don't want to see non-profit agencies including Prime Time House continue to get cut because they help me cope with my mental illness. I am helped by taking classes to learn skills to address my mental illness and by being able to come to Prime Time to practice my socialization and learn other skills that I never even realized I had. It is hard to progress without places like these.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Thank you,

Sie Sie Brayen

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is William Miller. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a current member of Prime Time House.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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I deeply feel if Prime Time House closed its doors it would be a very poor choice budget wise because mental illness being worked on with support systems is cheaper than hospitalizations. This clubhouse of which I belong, gave me my life back, over the years I have volunteered here, worked on Transitional Employments, and eventually a job with a paycheck, over my years of membership here. I have also personally witnessed, many positive and good things happening to all the members during the time that I have spent here. It's just a very needed place for those of us who need it.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Regards,

William Miller

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Richard Weeks. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a current member of Prime Time House.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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Prime Time House helped me get out of the house, and meet new people. I have never been a social butterfly but this place helped me with that. I would be lost without Prime Time House. I always stayed home before I came here, and did not know what to do. There are good people here that treat us like people, not illnesses and the staff aren't in it for the money, they are here to help us. Please don't cut the budget any more, in fact restore it to former amount or even increase it, thank you.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Sincerely,

Richard Weeks

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Sue Hilton. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a current member of Prime Time House.

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I have been here for a long time, and Prime Time helped me to get my present job at Big Y. Prime Time House has also helped me to get my housing, and has helped me with many other opportunities to better myself and also advocate for myself with my housing and bills. I could not have survived without this help. Prime Time, also has helped me with food from the food bank when I am short with money. If I were to get upset or need help with anything, they are always there for me. Budget cuts, would mean that some staff, would think about leaving, and we need them.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Regards,

Sue Hilton

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Andrew Turkenkopf. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a current member of Prime Time House.

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Prime Time House is an environment where I feel I am understood and welcomed. The confidence and self-esteem I have regained since becoming a member, has allowed me to explore interests that I was afraid to before. The support that I have received here has helped me get back into higher education, studying for a new career working with animals. I feel a sense of community plus support that is only possible because of the services and programs provided here.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Regards,

Andrew Turkenkopf

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is John Whalen. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a current member of Prime Time House.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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Prime Time House is important to me, and if it closed I wouldn't have anywhere to go or anything to do. I like the members and the staff. And this place gives me a place to go so I am not getting into trouble or home staring at the walls.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Thank you,

John Whalen

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Anna Bigelow. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a current member of Prime Time House.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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I think Prime Time house is beneficial to the community. Prime Time helps with education, meal preparation and transportation. Transportation is the most important aspect for me, as I cannot provide it for myself. If we were to experience a budget cut we may lose this resource. Having a budget increase would ensure that we are able to do more things and learn more skills on site. We Learn computer skills and reception skills. We also work side by side with career services and ensure we find a suitable job for a member. The staff needs an increase in the budget to ensure that they can properly help the member's needs.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Thank you,

Anna Bigelow